

The Mysterious Sword

By Tim Brown © 2017

The 1960 fall Sunday School quarterly for the junior high produced by the RLDS church has a picture on the cover depicting Joseph Smith Jr. kneeling beside an opened stone box. Inside the box was the abridged plates with a sword laying on top of them. In a series of four books called the Sword of Laban by Edward Butterworth, a similar scene is presented on the cover of Volume Four.

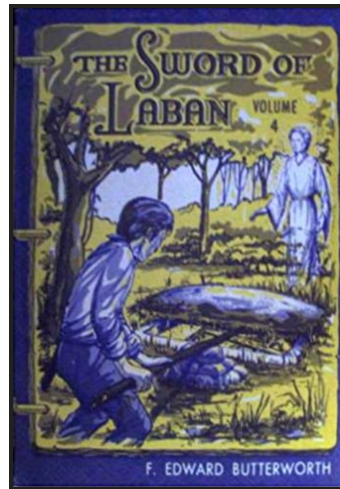
But what does history really say? What is fact and what is fiction? From Joseph Smith's teaching we are told that the only

things found inside the stone box were the plates from which the Book of Mormon were translated, the Urim and Thummim and the breast plate. There was no mention of a sword.

Let's turn back the pages of time. In the First Book of Nephi

from the Book of Mormon, we read that Nephi finds Laban drunk and passed out. Nephi takes Laban's sword from its sheath and describes it: "the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel." After dispatching Laban as God had requested, he takes the sword back to his father's tent and they carry it with them to the "land of promise."

The next we hear of it, the brothers had become enemies and Nephi uses it as a pat-



Continued on Page 2

The Sword of Laban

By Chris Scott © 2017 (Adapted from a 2017 sermon by Lynn Ridenhour)

The title of my sermon today is the Sword of Laban. I believe the Sword of Laban not only has a historical context, but is relevant for you and me. The subtitle of my sermon is that it is A Symbol of Priestly Authority and Compassion. I repeat A Symbol of Priestly Authority and Compassion. There is nothing like compassion; Jesus was moved with compassion of a Living God. He went around and

raised the dead and healed the sick.

I would like to share with you the beginning of a message that I delivered a few years back. It is pertinent to what I want to talk about. I delivered this message in Salt Lake City at a Book of Mormon conference. And I said this, "I am going to buy a big tent that holds about a thousand people and have tent revivals around town. I need to say something that should have been said a long time

ago. As a Southern Baptist minister, while searching through my family history, one day, I discovered some of my Missouri ancestors were involved in a Mormon War. It was in the mid 1800's and of course I wasn't

Continued on Page 3

Inside This Issue

The Mysterious Sword <i>Cont.</i>	2
The Sword of Laban <i>Cont.</i>	3, 4 & 7
Adventures in Archaeology	5 & 6
Visiting Teotihuacán	7
Book of Mormon Classes	8

The Mysterious Sword *continued*

tern to make other swords for the defense of his people. Several verses later in 2 Nephi 4:21, Nephi taught his people in all manner of wood, iron, copper, brass and steel, of gold, silver and of precious ores. It's interesting that he differentiates between iron and steel, implying they knew how to refine iron ore and add other ingredients to make steel.

About 450 years later we read in the Words of Mormon 1:20, where King Benjamin uses the Sword of Laban to fight against the Lamanites. As King Benjamin confers his kingdom to his son, Mosiah, he also gave him charge of other precious things: the plates of Nephi, Plates of Brass, Sword of Laban, and the director or Liahona. This is the last we hear about the Sword of Laban in the Book of Mormon. This was around 120 BC. When Alma confirms his leadership to Helaman, Alma gives him the plates of Nephi, Plates of Brass, the director or Liahona, but no Sword of Laban. Some 50 years after Benjamin gave it to Mosiah it seems to have vanished.

The only mention of the Sword of Laban in the Restoration movement comes from a revelation given through the instrument of the Urim and Thummim in 1829. Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon and he was finally going to have witnesses of the record so he wouldn't have to bear the burden alone. In the revelation given, they are told they would have a view of the plates, breast plate, Sword of Laban, Urim and Thummim and the director or Liahona. There is no mention that this was fulfilled except they did view the plates

by means of a divine messenger. I cannot find anything recorded where they attest to seeing any other items mentioned in the revelation.



Above: Dr. Jerry Ainsworth's rendition of the Sword of Laban fashioned from a 9th Century BC Philistine historical pattern.

Below: Dr. Ainsworth's Sword of Laban replica placed next to a typical Mesoamerican obsidian blade sword.



What is the origin of the Sword of Laban? No one knows for sure, but there are dots that we can connect that might give us a clue. In the old testament, David slew Goliath, a Philistine, and took his sword. The Philistines were known for their fine craftsmanship with gold and silver. It was second to none. David gave

the sword to King Saul. Later Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him. David left in haste and went to the priest of the tabernacle. David asked for a sword and the priest, Ahimelech, took Goliath's sword from behind the ephod (holy shroud or breastplate) and David explained, "there is none other like that, give it to me." It was a precious item that was kept in the holy shrine to remind the people of God's divine intervention in preserving their nation from its enemies.

Fast forward to the time of Jeremiah when Laban was in charge of the treasury, where the treasures, the precious items, were kept. Could it be that this sword that Laban was wearing was the same sword that David took from Goliath? David explained it was like none other. Nephi described Laban's sword as exceedingly fine workmanship, so much so that he used it as a pattern for his own swords. Laban had access to the precious things in the treasury. Could it be that the same sword taken from Goliath was taken from Laban to save their nation from spiritual destruction? Could it be that the Nephites used it to represent God's preservation of their lineage, but as they turned from Him, spiritual leaders could no longer use it for that purpose? Is that why we no longer hear about it as the Nephites turned away from their God?

Does it still exist? I believe it does. I believe it is one of the precious items like the Plates of Brass and the Liahona that will one day be a symbol of God's love and faithfulness to the righteous tribes of Israel.

The Sword of Laban *continued*

there. I've never been a Mormon, never driven one Mormon out of town, but as a young man growing up in a small Missouri town, I was warned about them. As Baptists we were always told to stay away from Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists. My preacher used to tell me they were cults. That stayed with me. I enrolled in William Jewell College as a ministerial student and my professors said that Mormons were a cult, so I believed, why shouldn't I? There came a day when the Lord convicted me that we must be careful in calling people or certain people or groups cults. The word cult signifies deliberate mind control or deception. I have never witnessed deliberate mind control among the Latter Day Saints, for that reason I will no longer pronounce moral judgement or demean them.

Early Christianity, if you recall, was also called a cult. Early Christianity was called 'the way', a term synonymous for cult. (Acts 24:5) I decided not to be so hasty in branding LDS. The problem doesn't go away with a simple acknowledgement.

The Bible acknowledges past injustices and still present lingering attitudes will be in the hearts of generations to come. It would be passed from one generation to the next. According to the Bible timing does not heal wounds, but instead the wound becomes more and more painful as it moves to each succeeding generation. We need only to see the life of Cain.

The Bible says Genesis 4:24 'If Cain shall be avenged seven fold and seventy the pain has multiplied.' It is time our land was healed. It is time we confess, not only our sins, but the sins of our

ancestors. Prophets of old did that you know. Nehemiah Chapter nine verse 2, 'And they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquity of their fathers.' Identification repentance premise reality of corporate sin, the thing we Americans struggle with, because of our rugged individualism. But the word of God is plain. Wherever and whenever many individuals are meaningfully linked together in social network that groups can sin—not as individuals, but as a group. When the group does sin, each individual member of the group to one degree or another is identified with the corporate sin, whether a person personally participated in the act itself or not. Exodus 32:9-14, Jeremiah 3:25, Psalm 1:6, Daniel 9:8, Ezra 9:6-7, Nehemiah 1:6-7.

Fortunately God gives us a way to confront corporate sin, just as he gives us a way to confront individual sin. Unconfessed sin constitutes a basis for Satanic rule. We must find a way of dealing with it, if we are to deliver people from demonic strongholds. It all begins with public confession and repentance. As a Southern Baptist minister I want to ask you Mormon Brothers and Sisters for your forgiveness. For the crimes of my ancestors and I want to ask forgiveness about how my ancestors treated your ancestors. And I want to ask your forgiveness for my spirit of judgment. Will you forgive me? I have been wanting to do that for a long time."

After I gave my talk a Mormon gentleman came up to me and confessed to me his lack of forgiveness for my ancestors who persecuted his ancestors. He asked me for my forgiveness. We

hugged and Heaven was cleansed that day.

The Sword of Laban is a symbol of compassion. Here is why. Let me give you a little bit of a historical context and make application. There are some precious truths associated with the Sword of Laban. Prophetic truths, I'm convinced, that pertain to you and to me. Kings, yes; heroes, yes; swords, yes; they all go together in fiction and in history—where you find one you find the other. I'm talking now about royalty. I'm talking about even Jesus coming back with a sword in his hand. Revelation 14.

You and I are to take up the Sword of Laban "prophetically speaking" and wield it.

The sword has a special place, not only in history and mythical literature but also in our hearts. Not only did Beowulf have a sword, Jesus had a sword, but so do we. Stories about swords take place in coronation ceremonies, Anglo-Saxon literature, and also in our hearts. Some are make believe, but some are very real.

A very real one started way back in the Garden of Eden, when God the Father had of all things what? He had a flaming sword. Jesus will return with his sword drawn. My point is that God, Jesus and you and I all have swords. All kings have swords. Are you and I not kings? Jesus is called the King of Kings.

David had a sword that he obtained from Goliath. And once King David obtained his sword, things changed. Attitudes toward King David changed. The women sang, Saul slew 10,000, but David 10s of thousands. Four

Continued on Page 4

The Sword of Laban *Continued*

hundred men began to follow David. After David had the sword even Saul responded and so did the priest Abiathar. David obtained the ephod from the priest Abiathar.

The sword not only became a sign of divine authority to the people, but also a symbol of kingship and priesthood. Whoever possesses the sword possesses God's favor. Boy we need a lot of favor around here; around everywhere. That's what priesthood is all about. Grace is an enactment of favor. Whoever wields the sword, wields God's favor.

Legend tells us that David passed the sword to his son Solomon. Solomon put it on a ship sailing out to sea. And legend tells us that this sword became the Excalibur of the Holy Grail. My point is sometimes history and legend become close together.

But what we are talking about this morning is not legend. There was an actual Sword of Laban. And thanks to the Book of Mormon we know more than a little. I quote from the encyclopedia of Mormonism concerning the sword, "Laban, a contemporary of Nephi I, approximately 600 BC possessed a unique sword." I Nephi 4:9, "the hilt was of pure gold, workmanship was exceedingly fine. The blade was most precious steel."

Nephi obtained the sword from Laban and brought it with him to the Western Hemisphere. Nephi made many swords after the manor of the Sword of Laban. This intrigues me. Nephi used the sword in defense of his people. Jacob 1:10. King Benjamin did the same. Words of Mormon

1:13. King Benjamin delivered the sword to his son Mosiah II 1:16. The point is the Sword of Laban seems to have been preserved in Nephite history as a sacred object. Why? Just as, Goliath's sword seemed to be a sacred object to the Israelites. Why? Here is a passage that tickles my spiritual gizzard from the journal is discourse. Brigham Young also reported that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery saw the Sword of Laban when they entered the cave in the Hill Cumorah with a large room containing many plates. The first time they went there. The Sword of Laban hung on the wall. But when they went again it had been taken down and laid on the table across the gold plates. It was unsheathed. Why? And on it were written these words. "This sword will never be sheathed again". Why? "Until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. That fascinates me."

Possession of the Sword of Laban and the regalia were looked upon by the people as having authority. Alma passed the sacred relics on to Helaman his son. Chapter 17:45. "Now remember my son (Helaman) that God has entrusted you with these things which are sacred." Why are these things sacred? He wants these things for a wise purpose to show forth his power. He that is godly will show forth his power to future generations. In other words, Joseph now had in his possession the regalia of the sacred things, which were required to hold the three offices, military, civil and

religious; the three roles of kingship. Joseph had gained God's favor.

What about us. Does the Sword of Laban have anything to do with me or you. Yes, the sword served its purpose for Nephi. Yes, the sword served its purpose for Joseph. Prophetically as Latter Day Saints we hold the sword, and it must remain unsheathed until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God.

I would like to quote from one of my favorite prophets Ezekial "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, son of man set thy face towards Jerusalem and drop thy word toward the Holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north.." That is prophetic language.

Paul used it a lot "I do not speak to you of the spiritual but the carnal". Flesh is a metaphor for selfish attitudes and belief systems of mankind. We are to take up the sword, prophetically speaking, and divide what is the Spirit of God and that which is the soullessness of man. Paul addressed this in I Corinthians 1:12. "Is Christ divided?" The sword of Laban prophetically speaking, which is in your hands and mine, divides that which is spirit and carnal. Anything that divides or attempts to divide Christ we have the power. It is called compas-

Continued on Page 7

Adventures In Scriptures

Issue 22

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Alma Visits Ammonihah

Alma, a High Priest of the church, was traveling as a missionary to spread the good news of the gospel. He went to Ammonihah to preach the Word of God. When he arrived, he found the people were no longer keeping God's commandments. Alma prayed to God because of his concern for these people. He prayed that God might let him baptize the people unto repentance.

They would not listen to the words of Alma. They said Alma had no authority over them, because they no longer believed as he did or in the traditions of their parents. They called Alma names, spit upon him and cursed at him. Then they threw him out of their city.

Alma was very sad for the people of Ammonihah, but continued his journey toward the city of Aaron. While he was journeying, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "*Blessed art thou, Alma*". The angel told Alma to return to the city of Ammonihah and give the people a message from God. The message from God was that he would destroy them if they did not repent. The city leaders were plotting to take away the liberty of the people. This was against God's will.

Alma returned to the city by a different entrance. He was met by Amulek who took him to his home and fed him. Amulek had also received a message from an angel about Alma's coming. Alma stayed with Amulek and they became friends. After a while they began to preach to the people of Ammonihah and they were cast into prison. [see next issue for the conclusion of this story] *Alma 6*

S	M	V	S	C	N	I	N	C	L	X	B	B	A
E	W	E	A	A	B	O	O	N	N	D	O	P	G
R	A	L	R	R	L	M	I	U	N	E	Q	N	B
V	M	L	H	C	F	V	T	S	C	D	I	H	V
E	F	M	C	O	Y	D	A	A	S	R	S	E	H
G	D	I	R	M	L	F	L	T	E	I	H	S	M
E	F	T	V	H	W	O	O	T	I	E	M	O	P
G	R	A	C	E	S	D	S	C	L	O	R	P	A
L	D	X	X	G	N	I	N	K	R	D	N	R	T
P	L	Z	G	M	N	F	O	L	R	V	K	U	I
J	Q	V	C	I	V	C	C	I	Z	Y	R	P	E
X	S	F	M	P	R	O	T	E	C	T	I	O	N
G	N	I	L	A	E	H	E	V	O	L	F	I	C
T	E	S	E	G	A	S	S	E	M	W	Z	M	E

Word search

Purpose of Angels

Calm
Comfort
Consolation
Grace
Healing
Love
Mercy
Messages
Ministering
Mission
Patience
Protection
Purpose
Salvation
Serve
Solace



The Sword of Laban *Continued*

sion.

If the sword remains in its sheath, we would all have to contend with the Baptists, the Lutherans, the Catholics, the LDS, the RLDS, the Community of Christ etc. Is Christ divided? NO! Brother Joseph wielded the Spirit very well in saying “I will not compel any man to believe as I do”.

Christians should desist con-

tending and cultivate the principals of communion and friendship. As believers we tend to forget that the Bible and Book of Mormon do not teach contention but unity of the Spirit. Hear me please: The quality of doctrine is based on creedal agreement. I don't have to agree with you and you don't have to agree with me. It is not that we disagree. It is the importance that we

place on our disagreements.

Unity of Spirit is what compassion is and unity of the Spirit is based upon his Lordship. Our Lord is compassionate demonstrated by his healing the sick and raising the dead in his earthly ministry.

God is the truth and the Sword of Laban is compassion.

Visiting Teotihuacán *By David B. Brown © 2017*

In mid-October of 2017 Neil Steede, his wife Trudy and David Brown ventured to Mexico City and spent a week at the site of Teotihuacán. Several meetings were conducted with the archaeological directors of the site and remarkable insights were gathered.

First, there was verification of the recent finds in the Pyramid of the Sun where large greenstone stelae were found buried in the rubble. According to Alejandro Sarabia, one was nine feet in length. This stone had been quarried and shaped, but left smooth with no carvings. It was the largest one of about 30 such pieces all shaped and smoothed without carvings.

In further discussions with Director Sarabia, we were informed of the multi-cultural endeavor displayed here at Teotihuacan. There were craftsmen from many local areas who were temporarily housed on the outskirts of Teotihuacán while the building of this incredible site was taking place. Subsets of housing

at the city demonstrate cultures from the Zapotec (Oaxacan Valley), Mixtec and Huastec are clearly indicated. The building of Teotihuacan was an endeavor that melted borders and unified different classes and sub-cultures. The indication is that these people were drawn to a singular vision and identity. Does this sound Book of Mormon Golden Age to you?

We also met with Sergio Gomez who is the principle director of the excavation taking place under the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl. This excavation

that began in 2010 is now nearly completed. Over 650,000 artifacts have been recovered after removing hundreds of tons of stone and dirt rubble. The critical aspect of charting the recovery of each artifact is almost done and now the task of cataloguing and classifying is beginning. And, the information we are receiving is astounding.

Carbon dating has determined that this tunnel was completed and sealed around 70 AD. There are seashells from all over the Gulf and the Pacific. There are ceramic statues from multiple Mesoamerican sub-cultures. There are indications of rubber processing previously thought to have been unknown until hundreds of years later. There are sacred concepts incorporated into the design which indicate a very advanced philosophical perspective. There is no doubt that as the archaeologists begin to unravel this enigma, our image and understanding of this ancient culture will change dramatically.



Neil Steede discussing the cataloguing and classifying of seashells with Director Sergio Gomez.

**We're on the web at
www.hceti.org**

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Book of Mormon Archaeology Classes By David B. Brown © 2017

Beginning January 14, 2018 and running for 8 eight weeks, David Brown will be making presentations on Book of Mormon Archaeology at the Buckner Community of Christ Congregation. These classes will begin at 4 PM Sunday afternoon and are slated to run for an hour-and-a-half. Each class will have two lessons that will be filmed and eventually provided on YouTube.

This particular series is geared toward the Book of Mormon reader who is not necessarily interested in the post-graduate level particulars of where information is found, how it is found, or who found it. Those references will be available for those who ask. This presentation is made as

an overview for specific subjects that demonstrate how Mesoamerican archaeology correlates to the Book of Mormon historical record and sacred philosophy, and it will illustrate how these are consistent with the overall information provided through the Book of Mormon.

There will be four subjects presented:

1. **Why is Mesoamerica Where the Book of Mormon Story Took Place?** This will focus on locating the Book of Mormon lands based on geographic, historic and cultural evidences.

2. **The Story of the Ammonites.** This series focuses on the historically traceable evidences of large sub-cultural groups that

relocated in the Mayan region.

3. **Palenque is Bountiful.** This series focuses on the overwhelming evidences for Christ found at Palenque and on the implications of what the archaeology provides concerning philosophy/theology.

4. **Teotihuacan—A Golden Age City.** This series demonstrates that while Teotihuacán was not a Book of Mormon city, it does testify that the Golden Age chronicled in the Book of Mormon did take place and that this city was not only one of the most influential powers during Jaredite (Olmec) times, but even into post-Nephite cultures.

Come join us for a series that should be most interesting and instructive.